

Histories of the Islamic World in the Chronicles of the Kingdom of León (End-Ninth to Mid-Twelfth Centuries)

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What did medieval Christians know about the history of Islam? This paper takes as a case study the situation of medieval Spain, focusing on a series of chronicles produced in Christian Spain from the late ninth to mid-twelfth centuries. It examines how their authors framed the Islamic world, in answer to their contemporary interests; in other words, how they translated within their own historical traditions the history of Islam. It argues that far from being absent in the texts analysed, the history of Islam provided a background, albeit diffuse, informing both the chroniclers' view of the world they lived in, and the rationale of their works.

I. Introduction

From the first essays of Southern and Daniel in the 1960s¹ to the recent contributions interrogating the medieval origins of Orientalism,² the question of the medieval Christian perception and knowledge of Islam has become a prolific disciplinary field. However, approaches have often privileged religious perspectives at the expense of politics, geography, and history. Whether represented as pagans or heretics, enemies or friends, neighbours or strangers,³ Muslims in medieval Christian thought are more rarely studied as members of the broader geopolitical and historical horizons within which Christian clerics, courtiers, and rulers knew, with more or less accuracy, they belonged. While the question has been addressed with respect to the oldest documentation accounting for the first expansion of the Islamic empire, when most Christian observers seemed surprisingly unaware of the fact that the Arab conquerors of the southern half of the Mediterranean

* This article has been largely informed by the work of and discussions I exchanged with Professor Simon Barton, who passed away prematurely. I wish I could have had the chance to receive more of his insight on the argument I hereby present, and I would like to dedicate this work to his memory.

¹ Richard W. Southern, *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962); Norman Daniel, *The Arabs and Mediaeval Europe* (London: Longman, 1975).

² Suzanne Akbari, *Idols in the East: European Representations of Islam and the Orient, 1100–1450* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009); Kim M. Phillips, *Before Orientalism: Asian Peoples and Cultures in European Travel Writing, 1245–1510* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014).

³ John V. Tolan, *Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Imagination* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

adhered to a new and distinct religion,⁴ it tends to disappear for later periods. That is to say that, while religious difference has certainly been fundamental to historical constructions of images of the Islamic Other,⁵ historians have not always sought to underline what medieval Christians perceived or contrived to see of the secular world in which this Other was evolving. And for good reason, as the documentation itself is at first sight poor in information, and does not immediately invite such a study. This article nevertheless proposes a contribution to ongoing discoveries, taking as a case study the situation of medieval Spain.

The medieval Iberian Peninsula offers a fertile terrain of investigation. One of the many ways Hispanicist historians envision the medieval Iberian Peninsula consists in considering it as a zone of contact between two worlds: Christendom and Islam. As such Spain has also carved a place for itself in the recent Mediterranean studies.⁶ Broadly put, the history of the Peninsula can be seen as that of the encounter, sometimes combative, sometimes collaborative, but at all time constructive, between al-Andalus as the Western arm of an Islamic domain that occupied the southern shores of the Mediterranean, and the Christian Spanish kingdoms seen to belong to a Christendom occupying its northern shores. However, did people back in medieval times think in such a way? Muslims are *de facto* omnipresent in the work of medieval Iberian historians,⁷ but did these historians feel, and write, that in their dealings with Muslims in Spain, they were part of a larger cultural area interacting with another larger cultural area? To propose an answer to this question, this paper analyses parts of the historiography produced in the kingdom of León from the end of the ninth to the mid-twelfth century, and examines the awareness that their authors had of the Islamic world.

It is commonly assumed that the *Historia Arabum* composed in the mid-thirteenth century by the Toledan archbishop Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada marked renewed interest in the history of the Islamic world in the Latin texts of Christian Iberia.⁸ For the first time in centuries, Islam was not just the *nefanda lex* of the

⁴ See for example Robert G. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish, and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1997).

⁵ As evidenced merely in the titles of works such as Stephen O'Shea, *Sea of Faith: The Shared Story of Christianity and Islam in the Medieval Mediterranean World* (New York: Walker, 2006) or Adnan A. Husain and Katherine E. Fleming, *A Faithful Sea: The Religious Cultures of the Mediterranean, 1200–1700* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2007).

⁶ See *In and of the Mediterranean: Medieval and Early Modern Iberian Studies*, ed. by Michelle Hamilton and Núria Silleras-Fernández (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2015). See also the number of entries related to Spain in the recent *Dictionnaire de la Méditerranée*, ed. by Dionigi Albera, Maryline Crivello, and Mohamed Tozy (Arles: Actes Sud, 2016).

⁷ As evidenced by Ron Barkai, *Cristianos y musulmanes en la España medieval (El enemigo en el espejo)* (Madrid: Rialp, 1984).

⁸ Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada, 'Historia Arabum', in *Roderici Ximenii de Rada Historiae Minores; Dialogus Libri Vite*, ed. by Juan Fernández Valverde, Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis, 72C (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999), pp. 87–149. Brief presentation and related bibliography by Matthias Maser in *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical*

Andalusi⁹ foe, but also a polity, comprising of various peoples, territories, and forms of government, born in Arabia and eventually expanding from there to al-Andalus throughout a complex political process.¹⁰ Of course this history was considered commendable to contemporary readers not for any socially tolerant inquiry or content, but as a work detailing the perceived dangers of Islam. Still, such a historiographical interest had been absent from Christian Iberia since the eighth century, when the *Chronica byzantia-arabica* and *Chronicle of 754* connected Iberian history to a larger Mediterranean frame, by describing events concomitantly happening in Byzantium, the Islamic world, and the Visigothic Iberian Peninsula.¹¹ On the contrary, Latin Iberian historiographical writings in between those two moments do not dedicate specific developments to the Islamic world, and they rather focus on the accounts of local events. It is attested that at least some of those texts made use of Arabic historiographical sources,¹² and Muslims are everywhere in the work of medieval Iberian historians, as Saracens, Hagarenes, Ishmaelites, Moors or Arabs—among the many ethnic labels, some of them archaic or even anachronistic, used to name them collectively. In most cases the works describe military encounters to justify and valorize the position and glory of those Christian kings and other heroic figures whose history is being told. But the Islamic world beyond these bordered accounts remains mostly a blurred, even obscured, reality, whether the result of the authors' genuine or strategic ignorance.¹³

History, Volume 4: 1200–1350, ed. by David Thomas and Alex Mallett (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 350–55.

⁹ In this article the term 'Andalusi' is preferred to 'Andalusian' to refer to the medieval inhabitants of Islamic Spain, in order to avoid any blurring between al-Andalus, as the medieval Islamic-ruled part of the Iberian Peninsula, and the modern autonomous community known as Andalucía. A detailed study of how 'Andalucía' came, in Christian sources from the thirteenth century onward, to progressively designate the Christian-ruled southern territories in a post-conquest context, remains to be conducted.

¹⁰ Lucy K. Pick, 'What Did Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada Know about Islam?', *Anuario de Historia de la Iglesia*, 20 (2011), 221–35.

¹¹ 'Chronica Byzantia-Arabica', ed. by Juan Gil, in *Corpus Scriptorum Muzarabicorum*, 2 vols (Madrid: Instituto 'Antonio de Nebrija', 1973), I, 7–14; *Crónica Mozárabe de 754 = Continuatio Isidoriana Hispana*, ed. and trans. by José Eduardo López Pereira (León: Centro de Estudios e Investigación 'San Isidoro', 2009). Brief presentation and related bibliography by Cyrille Aillet and Kenneth B. Wolf respectively in *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History, Volume 1: 600–900*, ed. by David Thomas and Barbara Roggema (Leiden: Brill, 2009), pp. 284–89, 302–04.

¹² See the reflections on that matter of Matthias M. Tischler, 'Translation-Based Chronicles, Twelfth to Thirteenth Centuries. New Sources for the Arabo-Latin Translation Movement in the Iberian Peninsula', *Journal of Transcultural Medieval Studies*, 1.2 (2014), 175–218.

¹³ Southern posited that the little interest demonstrated by Christian authors for the Islamic world until the twelfth century was characteristic of an 'Age of Ignorance' (Southern, *Western Views*, p. 14). Other scholars have also demonstrated that this ignorance could as well be strategically cultivated, as a means to avoid acknowledging any room for those who were, after all, an archetypal enemy. See Bernard Richard, 'L'Islam et les Musulmans chez les chroniqueurs castillans du milieu du Moyen Âge', *Hespéris-Tamuda*, 12 (1971), 107–32 (pp. 118–22).

However, in some of these works, scattered elements are present that offer glimpses of understandings and interest in the Islamic world. Drawing upon the findings of previous studies, this paper investigates to what extent, beyond the depiction of Muslims as an often seemingly uniform and sometimes terminologically indefinite foe, Christian Iberian historians understood them as belonging to the larger Islamic cultural area. This is to consider whether or not Christian Spanish historians perceived al-Andalus itself as a part of a broader entity, and how they characterized the nature of the relationship between this local part and the Islamic world whole. Ultimately, by situating the incorporation of these translated and/or rendered glimpses of knowledge in the structure of Iberian Christian chronicles, this paper also seeks to underline the role these inclusions played in the rationale of these texts.

II. The Variable Islamic Historical Background of the *Asturian Chronicles*

A gap of more than a century separates the composition of the mid-eighth-century Latin chronicles mentioned above, from the first historiographical texts originating in Christian Iberia. The well-known *Asturian Chronicles*—comprising the *Prophetic Chronicle*, the *Chronicle of Albelda*, and the *Chronicle of Alfonso III*—emerged in the context of the culturally flourishing court of Oviedo under the reign of King Alfonso III (866–910), at a time when the Asturian kingdom was grounded enough to assert its political leadership and reflect on its past trajectory. Dynastic instability and constant pressure coming from al-Andalus rendered a showcasing of historically triumphant kingship particularly welcome.¹⁴ The earliest of these texts is the *Prophetic Chronicle*, thus named by its first editor, Manuel Gómez-Moreno, due to its half-historical and half-apologetic contents. It was probably completed in April 883 at the court of Oviedo by a Mozarabic cleric, perhaps identified as Dulcidius, a Toledan priest close to Alfonso III and sent by him on a mission to Córdoba in that same year. The ‘chronicle’ revolves around a reinterpretation of the prophecy of Ezekiel with the purpose of predicting the precise end of Islamic domination in Hispania and the restoration of the

¹⁴ Two editions of the *Asturian Chronicles*, accompanied by substantial introductions and commentaries, as well as translations into Spanish and French, were published concomitantly in the 1980s: *Crónicas asturianas*, ed. by Juan Gil, trans. by José L. Moralejo, and study by Ignacio Ruiz de la Peña (Oviedo, Universidad de Oviedo, 1985); *Chroniques asturiennes: fin IX^e siècle*, ed. and trans. by Yves Bonnaz (Paris, CNRS, 1987). This article refers to the former for the Latin text of both the *Chronicle of Albelda* and the *Chronicle of Alfonso III*. However, Bonnaz’s edition is preferred for the Latin text of the *Prophetic Chronicle*, for the reason that the editor conceived of it—and presented it—as an individual piece of work detached from the *Chronicle of Albelda* next to which the manuscript tradition often transmitted it, an opinion which we share. English translations of the *Prophetic Chronicle* and *Chronicle of Alfonso III* are respectively borrowed, when appropriate, from ‘Chronica Prophetica’, trans. by Kenneth Baxter Wolf, *Medieval Texts in Translation*, 2008 <http://scholarship.claremont.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1046&context=pomona_fac_pub>; and Kenneth Baxter Wolf, *Conquerors and Chroniclers of Early Medieval Spain* (Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 1990), pp. 159–77. The English translation of the *Chronicle of Albelda* is my own.

Visigothic kingdom, by 11 November 884.¹⁵ In so doing, it incorporates a series of short texts of historiographical nature, including a genealogy of the Saracens from Abraham to the contemporary Andalusī emir, Muḥammad I (852–886), a history of Muḥammad the ‘*pseudo propheta*’, a narrative of the Arab conquest of the peninsula and its providentialist explanation, and a list of the governors (*duces*) and later emirs (*reges*) of al-Andalus.¹⁶ The redaction of the *Chronicle of Albelda*, named after the monastery where one of the manuscripts that transmitted it was found,¹⁷ followed shortly after, and was probably finished by November 883.¹⁸ It was composed anonymously at the Oviedan court too, and in various manuscripts it incorporates in its final paragraphs the *Prophetic Chronicle*. But it consists above all of a lengthy original composition, starting as a universal history comprising of miscellaneous geographical and chronographic pieces, followed by an *ordo Romanorum regum* from Romulus to the Byzantine Emperor Tiberius III (d. 711). The focus then moves to Hispania and the *ordo gentis Gotorum*, first with the history of the Visigothic kings from Athanaric (d. 381) to Roderic (d. 711), then that of the *Gotorum Obetensium regum*, or ‘Gothic kings of Oviedo’, that is, the Asturian rulers from the rise of Pelagius around 732 to the ongoing reign of Alfonso III.¹⁹ The last text is known as the *Chronicle of Alfonso III*, due to the once supposed intervention of the king himself in its redaction, among other hypotheses of authorship. It was transmitted in two distinct versions (*Rotense* and *ad Sebastianum*, as referred to in Juan Gil’s edition), resulting from a rewriting in the very early tenth century of an archetype composed in Oviedo in the early 880s.²⁰ It was conceived as a national history and a continuation of Isidore of Seville’s *Historia Gothorum*. As such, it offers a series of royal biographies from the reign of the Visigothic King Recceswinth (d. 672) to the Asturian King Ordoño I (d. 866), the immediate predecessor of Alfonso III.²¹

Because of their common context of production and chronological proximity, and despite the variety of their contents, these three texts have been traditionally

¹⁵ Brief presentation and related bibliography of both the *Prophetic Chronicle* and *Chronicle of Albelda* by Thomas Deswarte in *Christian-Muslim Relations 1*, ed. by Thomas and Roggema, pp. 810–15.

¹⁶ Latin text in Bonnaz, *Chroniques asturiennes*, pp. 2–9, henceforward *Proph.*

¹⁷ The famous *Codex Albeldensis* compiled in the monastery of Albelda in the tenth century, nowadays conserved in the library of the Escorial, MS d.I.2.

¹⁸ For a presentation of the *Chronicle of Albelda*, see note 15 above.

¹⁹ Latin text in Gil, Moralejo, Ruiz de la Peña, *Crónicas asturianas*, pp. 151–188 (including some of the *Prophetic Chronicle* material on pp. 181–188), henceforward *Alb.*

²⁰ Presentation and related bibliography in *Christian-Muslim Relations 1*, ed. by Thomas and Roggema, pp. 882–88. On the relation existing between the two versions of the *Chronicle of Alfonso III*, see Gil, Moralejo, Ruiz de la Peña, *Crónicas asturianas*, pp. 38–41, 45–80.

²¹ Latin text in Gil, Moralejo, Ruiz de la Peña, *Crónicas asturianas*, pp. 113–49, henceforward *Alf.* for both versions, *Alf., Rot.* for the *Rotense* version, *Alf., Seb.* for the *ad Sebastianum* version.

grouped as the *Asturian Chronicles*, or ‘Asturian cycle’.²² They have also long been recognized as the site where a neo-gothicist ideology was first defined, according to which the growing Asturian kingdom was to crush its Islamic foe and lead a Gothic revival, as the historical successor—indeed the continuator—of the former Christian Visigothic kingdom vanquished by the Saracens in the early eighth century.²³ As such, these chronicles provided the basis on which modern scholars would, centuries later, label the polemical ideal of Reconquest, much discussed in recent decades,²⁴ as a fundamentally Christian interpretation of the territorial, social, and cultural dynamics of medieval Iberia. Initiating a historiographical style focused on peninsular events, they certainly left aside the Mediterranean background present in previous Iberian chronicles. Further, al-Andalus would appear in this narrowed historical conception only inasmuch as its interaction with the Asturian kingdom served the general narrative of the neo-gothicist discourse. However, a close reading of the three components of the Asturian historiographical ‘cycle’ also reveals that they each conveyed a unique discourse of monarchical legitimation. Their common neo-gothicist posture supposes three different solutions for envisaging the connection between the recently risen kingdom of Oviedo and its Visigothic predecessor, the nature of the Islamic presence in the Iberian Peninsula, and the role to be played by the Asturian kings in the Reconquest.²⁵ In related fashion, another peculiarity of each chronicle lies in the way their authors chose to refer to, or obscure, the Islamic world as a background context of their historical narrative.

The importance given to the history of the Islamic world in the *Prophetic Chronicle* has been widely commented on by scholars, if only to point out its

²² The *Asturian Chronicles* are often referred to as ‘Asturian cycle’ or ‘cycle of Alfonso III’ since the first study by Manuel Gómez-Moreno, ‘Las primeras crónicas de la Reconquista: el ciclo de Alfonso III’, *Boletín de la Real Academia de la Historia*, 100 (1932), 565–628.

²³ On the notion of neo-gothicism and its ideological expression in the Asturian, then Leonese kingdom, see Thomas Deswarte, *De la destruction à la restauration: l'idéologie du royaume d'Oviedo-León (VIII^e–XI^e siècles)* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003).

²⁴ The term is understood here as referring to an ideology forged in medieval Christian Iberia in order to justify the territorial expansion proper to the Christian kingdoms during the period, and based on the ideal goal of restoration of the ancient Christian political and religious unity over the entire peninsula. For a discussion of the historiographical debates at stake behind the term, and its supposed relevance for characterizing the whole medieval history of the Peninsula, see Manuel González Jiménez, ‘Re-Conquista? Un estado de la cuestión’, in *Tópicos y realidades de la Edad Media*, ed. by Eloy Benito Ruano (Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia, 2000), pp. 155–78; John V. Tolan, ‘Using the Middle Ages to Construct Spanish Identity: 19th- and 20th-Century Spanish Historiography of Reconquest’, in *Historiographical Approaches to Medieval Colonization of East Central Europe*, ed. by Jan M. Piskorski (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), pp. 329–48; Martín Ríos Saloma, *La Reconquista: una construcción historiográfica (siglos XVI–XIX)* (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2011).

²⁵ For a comparison of the neo-gothicist discourse of the three components of the *Asturian Chronicles*, see Hélène Sirantoine, ‘Le Discours monarchique des *Chroniques asturiennes* (fin IX^e siècle): trois modes de légitimation pour les rois des Asturies’, in *Monarquía y sociedad en el reino de León: de Alfonso III a Alfonso VII*, ed. by José María Fernández Catón, Fuentes y estudios de historia leonesa, 118, 2 vols (León: Centro de Estudios e Investigación ‘San Isidoro’, 2007), II, 793–819.

probable Mozarabic authorship, its Arabic sources, and the pro-Umayyad bias clearly identifiable in its historiographical agenda. On the other hand, discrepancies between the various parts of the texts, with some of them plainly ignorant of the Islamic particularities while others reveal precise accuracy, have been stressed to assert the plurality of authors and/or the compilatory character of the whole.²⁶ The fact remains that, in order to argue the imminent Visigothic restoration, the author/compiler of this prophetic narrative found it desirable to include in its divinatory information relative to how Iberian history came to be intimately entangled with the rising Islamic empire. By doing so, the projected end of the Islamic domination in Spain was to become not only a local event concerning those Christian Spaniards suffering under the 'yoke of the Ishmaelites', but rather part of the meaningful trope of the rise and fall of empires, in this case Islamic, the fall of which would happen to begin in Iberia. In such a perspective, the history of the Islamic world, as is proper, had to be identified within existing world history, which for Christian minds immediately required a biblical background. The 'genealogy of the Saracens' (*Proph.*, cap. 3) thus starts with a reference to the by-then traditional Christian assertion, borrowed from Jerome, of a usurpation of legitimate Abrahamic origins: 'The Saracens perversely think themselves to be descended from Sarah. In truth, they are Hagarenes from Hagar and Ishmaelites from Ishmael'.²⁷ However the following enumeration takes on Arabic chronologists to identify the genealogical succession of those pseudo-Saracens from Abraham to Muḥammad, before proceeding with the Umayyad family in the East first, then in the West up to Muḥammad I, third independent emir of Córdoba.²⁸ In the ensuing 'History of Muḥammad' (*Proph.*, cap. 4), one of the first polemical texts against Islam written in the West,²⁹ secular aspects of the new 'law' established are underlined: Muḥammad is a *nefandus propheta*, but he is also presented as a political leader who 'ruled for ten years'.³⁰ Notwithstanding their exaggerated attributions to the Prophet's living leadership, we see mentioned furthermore the early successes of Islam in Syria over Byzantium and the subsequent establishment

²⁶ Juan Gil, 'Judíos y cristianos en Hispania (s. VIII y IX)', *Hispania Sacra: Revista Española de Historia Eclesiástica*, 31 (1978), 9–88, here pp. 56–64.

²⁷ 'Sarraceni peruerse se putant esse ex Sarra. Verius Agareni ab Agar et Ismaelitis ab Ismael': *Proph.*, cap. 3, p. 3. On the etymology of 'Saracen', see Dolores Oliver Pérez, 'Sarraceno: su etimología e historia', *Al-Qantara*, 15.1 (1994), 99–130.

²⁸ Bonnaz, *Chroniques asturiennes*, p. 62 n. 2.

²⁹ The *Prophetic Chronicle* incorporates the 'biography' of Muḥammad which Eulogius of Córdoba had himself included in his *Liber apologeticus martyrum* (mid-ninth century): see Dominique Millet-Gérard, *Chrétiens mozarabes et culture islamique dans l'Espagne des VIII^e–IX^e siècles* (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1984); Kenneth Baxter Wolf, 'The Earliest Latin Lives of Muḥammad', in *Conversion and Continuity: Indigenous Christian Communities in Islamic Lands Eighth to Eighteenth Centuries*, ed. by Michael Gervers (Toronto: Pontifical Institute for Medieval Studies, 1997), pp. 89–101.

³⁰ 'Obtinuit praedictus Mahmeth nefandus propheta principatum annis X': *Proph.*, cap. 4, p. 5.

in Damascus of ‘the capital of the kingdom’.³¹ As a logical continuation of this initial success story, the following development on ‘The reason for the incursion of the Saracens into Spain’ (‘Ratio Sarracenorum de sua ingressione in Spania’, *Proph.*, cap. 5), providentially attributed the event to the collective sinful character of the Visigothic people, setting the invasion as having occurred when ‘Walīd, the *amir almuminin*, son of ‘Abd al-Malik, was ruling in Africa, in the hundredth year of the Arabs’ and concomitantly the Islamic pacification of the Maghreb—‘the country of the Moors’—by governor Mūsā.³² Although the chronology of the Islamic history is faulty, and its geography rather blurry,³³ we can only note the precision adopted by the chronicler in the designation of Caliph al-Walīd I (r. 705–715) as *amir almuminin*, a title rather exceptional in Iberian medieval historiography.³⁴ It reappears further, in the middle of the consequent enumeration (*Proph.*, cap. 7) of the leaders who ruled ‘in Spain’—namely, al-Andalus³⁵—, as part of a distinction made, again quite unusual in the Iberian documentation, between two periods of the early history of al-Andalus, during which Islamic Iberia was at first a province of the larger Empire, governed by *walīs*, and later became an independent Umayyad emirate:

These governors [*duces*, i.e. the previously mentioned Andalusi *walīs* from Mūsā ibn Nušair (r. 712–714) to Ṭha‘laba ibn Salāma (r. 742–743)] had short reigns with one succeeding the other, as designated by the *amir almuminin*, who also terminated some by death. Their combined reigns lasted 27 years, 11 months. Here are the kings [*reges*, i.e. the further emirs of al-Andalus from, erroneously, Yūsuf ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān (r. 747–756) to Muḥammad I (r. 852–886)] who ruled in Spain who were from Banu Umayyad of the Ishmaelites.³⁶

³¹ ‘Apud Damascus Syriae urben regni principium fundauerunt’: *Proph.*, cap. 4, p. 5.

³² ‘Regnante in Africa Ulid, amir al muminin, filio de Abdelmelic, anno Arabum centesimo, era et anno quo supra, ingressus est Abuzura, sub Muza duce in Africa commanente et Maurorum patrias defæcante’: *Proph.*, cap. 5, pp. 6–7.

³³ We will see below that naming ‘Africa’ as the Islamic domain in which the caliphs were ruling was a recurrent practice.

³⁴ A systematic survey remains to be done, but so far I have read this title to refer to the Eastern caliphs only in the *Chronicle of 754* and in Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada’s *Historia Arabum*.

³⁵ On the designation of al-Andalus as *Hispania* in the Iberian documentation at least up to the eleventh century, see Amancio Isla Frez, *Memoria, culto y monarquía hispánica entre los siglos X y XII* (Jaén: Universidad de Jaén, 2006), pp. 166–84; Raúl Manchón Gómez, *Léxico de las instituciones político-administrativas y militares en la documentación medieval latina del reino de León (775–1230)* (León: Universidad de León, 2000), pp. 51–63.

³⁶ ‘Hii duces breuem principatum agebant tempora quia aliis alii succedebant; prout destinatum erat ab Amir Almuminin nonnullos principatus uitae finie terminabant. Item, reges qui regnauerunt in Spania ex origine Ismaelitarum Beniumeia’: *Proph.*, cap. 7, p. 8.

If the facts are again here somewhat incorrect, with *walī* Yūsuf being mistakenly enlisted as the first Umayyad ‘king’,³⁷ the differentiation between *duces* and *reges* testifies to an endeavour to precisely render the evolution of the situation of al-Andalus within the larger Islamic world, which would not be found again in Iberian historiography until long afterwards.

Indeed, the authors of the next two texts of the ‘Asturian cycle’ did not apply such precision. As a matter of fact, they did not have to, inasmuch as they did not make the choice of resorting to the narrative of the rise and fall of empires to enhance the glorious neo-gothic destiny of the Asturian dynasty, perhaps discouraged by the failure of the prediction foretold by the *Prophetic Chronicle*. Nonetheless, it is possible to glean data revealing that they did not entirely ignore the Islamic world either. Or rather, one of them still found it useful to keep it in the background of the historical narration. On that matter Barkai argued that the *Chronicle of Albelda*, owing to its inclusion of the *Prophetic Chronicle*, was far more detailed and accurate than the *Chronicle of Alfonso III* in regard to the sparse information it transmitted about Islam and Muslim historical actors.³⁸ However, if the remark is mostly valid when observing the rendition of matters related to al-Andalus, the contrary appears when one studies the larger Islamic background, which appears more connected with the Iberian Peninsula in the Alfonsine text than in the *Chronicle of Albelda*.

The *Chronicle of Albelda* first embraces a large chronological and geographical span in its *ordo Romanorum*, that makes the history of Byzantium and its emperors the background of early Visigothic history. However, and unlike the *Chronica byzantia-arabica* and *Chronicle of 754*, in this narration the author devoted no space to accounting for the political birth of Islam. The Prophet is mentioned only later, in the *ordo gentis Gotorum*, and presented not as the founder of a kingdom but as ‘the execrable Muḥammad [who] preached in Africa his wicked law to stupid peoples’ while King Sisebut (r. 612–621) was ruling Hispania.³⁹ When the Saracens make their first appearances—at the very end of the *ordo Romanorum regum* to briefly refer to the Iberian invasion, then at the end of the *ordo gentis Gotorum* to refer to the Islamic occupation of Iberia and the rebellion of Pelagius⁴⁰—, their arrival is abrupt and no details are given as to their provenance. The absence of interest of the author for the Islamic world outside of al-Andalus shows eventually in the last part of the chronicle dedicated

³⁷ Without being an Umayyad, and though formally a *walī*, Yūsuf however ruled al-Andalus in the fashion of the next autonomous emirs, especially after the Umayyad caliph of Damascus was overthrown in 750: Roger Collins, *The Arab Conquest of Spain 710–797* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), pp. 114–15. This probably explains his inclusion into the list of Andalusī *reges*, here defined by opposition to the *duces* ‘designated by the *amir al-muminin*’.

³⁸ Barkai, *Cristianos y musulmanes*, pp. 32–33.

³⁹ ‘Tunc nefandus Mahomat in Africa nequitiam legis stultis populis predicabit’: *Alb.*, *ordo gentis Gotorum*, XIV.24, p. 169.

⁴⁰ *Alb.*, *ordo Romanorum regum*, XIII.69, p. 166, and *ordo gentis Gotorum*, XIV.34, p. 171.

to the history of the ‘Gothic kings of Oviedo’, including their numerous deeds involving Andalusī protagonists. It has been repeatedly noted that the chronicler was particularly knowledgeable regarding the names of the Muslim actors led to interact with the Asturian kings. The text is also quite detailed when it comes to describing particular episodes, such as the rebellion of Maḥmūd of Mérida against Emir ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II (r. 822–852), and his consecutive temporary alliance with Alfonso II of Asturias (r. 791–842).⁴¹ The chronicler obviously had access to accurate, and probably Arabic, sources of information which he took advantage of. However, his undistinguished designation of Andalusī leaders as *reges*, notwithstanding their status as *walīs* of the Eastern caliphs, or later autonomous Umayyad emirs, reveals that the chronicler was not intending to further establish any correlation between al-Andalus and a larger Islamic world, the geopolitical evolution of which he consciously ignored.⁴²

Comparatively, the *Chronicle of Alfonso III* provides rare but slightly more explicit information regarding the situation of al-Andalus within the Islamic world, especially in its version *ad Sebastianum*. Focused on a local history of Christian Iberia from the last Visigothic kings to the mid-ninth century, the chronicle does not account at all for the birth of Islam, whether politically or religiously,⁴³ and gives quantitatively less detail relative to the internal affairs of al-Andalus than the previous texts. However, it is worth noting that some episodes reveal a deeper comprehension of the diversity characteristic of Andalusī society. Thus, in the *Rotense* version of the account of Maḥmūd of Mérida’s rebellion against ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II, the chronicler alluded to the *muwallad* origins of the protagonist, probably as a way to both suggest the reason of Maḥmūd’s discontent towards the Cordoban regime and explain why he would turn to and be at first welcomed by King Alfonso II.⁴⁴ In the same fashion, and in both versions this time, on two occasions the chronicler refers to the ‘Quraysh descent’ of Muslim leaders,⁴⁵ bringing up the presence in al-Andalus of a recently immigrated Arab aristocracy related to the tribe to which Prophet Muḥammad belonged.⁴⁶ The scanty mentions

⁴¹ *Alb., ordo Gotorum Obetensium regum*, XV.9, pp. 174–75. On Maḥmūd of Mérida, see Ann Christys, ‘Crossing the Frontier of Ninth-Century Hispania’, in *Medieval Frontiers: Concepts and Practices*, ed. by David Abulafia and Nora Berend (Farnham: Ashgate, 2002), pp. 35–53.

⁴² Contra, see Barkai, *Cristianos y musulmanes*, p. 32. The examples Barkai gives nevertheless refer to the material borrowed from the *Prophetic Chronicle* that, as mentioned above, was incorporated into the *Chronicle of Albelda* in some of the manuscripts transmitting it. The original paragraphs of the Albeldensian text do not testify to the same accuracy.

⁴³ Indeed, the text comprises very few mentions to Islam as a religious law, with the exception of one reference to the ‘ritu Mamentiano’: *Alf., Rot.*, cap. 25, p. 144; and ‘ritum Mamentiano’: *Alf., Seb.*, cap. 25, p. 147.

⁴⁴ ‘Uir quidam nomine Mahamuth ciues Emeritensis natione mollitis regi suo Abderrahman rebellauit’: *Alf., Rot.*, cap. 22, p. 140. *Muwalladūn*, or *muladies*, were Muslims of Hispanic descent, relatively recently converted to Islam.

⁴⁵ *Alf.*, cap. 22, pp. 140–41, and cap. 25, p. 146–47.

⁴⁶ See Bonnaz, *Chroniques asturiennes*, p. 196 n. 3.

do not facilitate an easy appreciation of what the chronicler aimed at stressing, or, for that matter, if he was aware of the significance of the name. However, he might well have been so, as other passages relate the arrival of Muslims in Iberia to the existence of the early Islamic Empire, identified as originating from beyond the peninsula. When the Saracens appear first in the *Chronicle of Alfonso III* in a notice dedicated to the Visigothic kings Wamba (r. 672–680) and Erwig (r. 680–687), they come from an unidentified overseas location:

In [Wamba's] time, 270 Saracen ships attacked the coast of Hispania, and there all of their armies were destroyed by the sword and their ships entirely burnt. And for you to understand completely the reason for the Saracens entering Hispania, we will explain the origins of Erwig.⁴⁷

In addition to the obscure reference to a Muslim naval incursion in Spain not otherwise documented, the correlation made between the Saracen invasion of Spain and the origins of King Erwig can appear at first surprising. It does make sense however in the frame of the general providentialist and neo-gothicist discourse of the text. As would be reiterated in various versions in later historiographical accounts,⁴⁸ the chronicler presented the early eighth-century Arab invasion as a scourge sent by God to punish the sinful Visigothic kings. The originality of the chronicle resides however in the inclusion, amongst these, of King Erwig, a half-foreigner fathered by a Greek migrant who had wedded the niece of King Chindaswinth (r. 642–643), and was guilty of an attempt of regicide against King Wamba prior to his own assumption to the throne.⁴⁹ Then came Wittiza (r. 694–710), whose licentious behaviour ‘was the cause of Hispania’s ruin’.⁵⁰ His immoral character was inherited by his sons who, jealous of their father’s successor—a King Roderic (r. 710–711) not dissimilar in vice to his predecessor—, ‘sent envoys to Africa, asked the Saracens for help, and introduced them to Spain on board of ships’.⁵¹ Although ‘Africa’ is an indistinct localization for the provenance of

⁴⁷ ‘Illius namque tempore ducente septuaginta naues Sarracenorum Yspanie litus sunt adgresse, ibique omnia eorum agmina ferro sunt deleta et classes eorum ignibus concremate. Et ut tibi causam introitus Sarracenorum in Yspaniam plene notesceremus, originem Eruii regis exponimus’: *Alf., Seb.*, cap. 2, p. 117. Note that the *Rotense* version does not include the mention of Erwig’s origins.

⁴⁸ See Patrick Henriët, ‘Perte et récupération de l’Espagne: les constructions léonaises (XI^e–XIII^e siècles)’, in *Le Passé à l’épreuve du présent. Appropriations et usages du passé au Moyen Âge et à la Renaissance*, ed. by Pierre Chastang (Paris: Presses de l’Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2008), pp. 119–35.

⁴⁹ On the wicked character attributed to Erwig’s Greek origins, see Bonnaz, *Chroniques asturiennes*, p. 120 n. 1.

⁵⁰ ‘Istut namque Spanie causa pereundi fuit’: *Alf., Rot.*, cap. 5, p. 118.

⁵¹ ‘Filii uero Uuittizani inuidia ducti eo quod Rudericus regnum patris eorum acceperat, callide cogitantes missos ad Africam mittunt, Sarracenos in auxilium petunt eosque nauibus aduectos Yspaniam intromittunt’: *Alf., Seb.*, cap. 6, p. 121. The *Rotense* version is more elliptic in its account: ‘In the third year of [Roderic’s] rule, the Saracens entered Spain on account of the treachery of the sons of Witiza’ (‘Anno regni illius tertio ob causam fraudis filiorum Uitizani Sarazeni ingressi sunt Spaniam’: *Alf., Rot.*, cap. 7, p. 120).

those Saracens, this time they have a place of origins, unlike in the *Chronicle of Albelda*. Besides, the ensuing narration of the invasion of Spain and collapse of the Visigothic domination ends up with this interesting notice:

The Arabs, whilst oppressing the country along with the kingdom, paid for several years through their governors a tribute to the Babylonian king, until they elected a king for themselves, and strengthened their own kingdom in the city of Córdoba the Patrician.⁵²

The designation ‘Babylonian king’ evidently refers to the Eastern caliph, and behind the elected king we must identify ‘Abd al-Rahmān I, first emir of the autonomous Western Umayyad emirate established from 756.⁵³ As had been the case for the author of the *Prophetic Chronicle*, the chronicler of Alfonso III reveals a politically aware explanation of the governmental relations linking the Umayyad caliphate to its Andalusí province during the first four decades of the Islamic presence in Iberia, as well as the later independence of al-Andalus. In so doing, he was also refining another aspect of his historical discourse. In his study of the *Chronicle of Alfonso III*, Kenneth Wolf argued that, put to the test by the divine scourge embodied in the conquering Muslims from ‘Africa’, the humbled Visigoths were assimilated with the Chosen People of the Bible.⁵⁴ Similarly, by retaliating against the Muslims of the Córdoba kingdom, the Asturians, as thereby the heirs of the Goths/Chosen People, were on their way to recover their (Hispanic) Promised Land. Whether one agrees or not with Wolf’s analysis, the biblical parallel established by the chroniclers between the Hebrews’ and the *Hispani*’s fate is to be underlined. In such a dialectic, the designation of the caliph as ‘Babylonian king’, biblical foe of Israel, may not have to be read as scribal ignorance or misconception, but instead as a means to carry a meaningful comparison. Consequently, the glimpses of the wider Islamic world in the *Chronicle of Alfonso III* would provide, rather than only incidental information, evidence of a more complex cultural awareness and discursive representation.

III. Pave the Way: Barbarians and Moabites in the *Historia Silense*

Such a strategy was of no interest to the author of the next main historiographical text produced in the Leonese kingdom. The *Chronicle of Sampiro*—composed at the turn of the millennium, perhaps by the homonymous Sampiro, a notary of King Alfonso V (r. 999–1028) who might be the same person who later became bishop of Astorga (d. 1041)—is known in two different versions, through its interpolation in productions of the early twelfth century, the *Historia Silense* and the *Chronicle*

⁵² ‘Arabes tamen patria simul cum regno oppresso pluribus annis per presides Babilonico regi tributa persoluerunt, quousque sibi regem elegerunt et Cordobam urbem patriciam regnum sibi firmaverunt’: *Alf., Seb.*, cap. 8, p. 123.

⁵³ Barkai, *Cristianos y musulmanes*, p. 33.

⁵⁴ Wolf, *Conquerors and Chroniclers*, pp. 46–60, especially p. 48.

of Pelagius.⁵⁵ Although formally continuing the *Chronicle of Alfonso III*, with a series of royal biographies of the Asturian and Leonese kings from Alfonso III to the beginning of Alfonso V's reign, Sampiro rather followed the pattern opened by the *Chronicle of Albelda* and largely ignored the Islamic world. With a focus reduced entirely to the Astur-Leonese kingdom, only Andalusī Muslims attacking or attacked by the Christians are mentioned.⁵⁶ In that respect the evolution of al-Andalus from emirate to caliphate from 929 goes unnoticed: it was of no concern to the chronicler, who designated the emirs and caliphs *reges Cordubenses* all the same.⁵⁷ As for al-Mansūr, the famous *ḥādjīb* [chamberlain] of Caliph Hishām II (r. 976–1009), who plundered the Northern Christian kingdoms during the last decade of the tenth century, the chronicler titles him *rex*.⁵⁸ It is impossible to decide if this was the result of a misconception, or an implicit recognition of al-Mansūr's authority while the caliph was secluded in the Cordoban palace. What is interesting however is the difference which can be observed between both versions of the chronicle as regards al-Mansūr's identity and his actions, that identify him within the Islamic world. Thus, in the Pelagian version, al-Mansūr is *rex Alcorexi*, as if belonging to the Arab tribe of Quraysh.⁵⁹ Could this have been a way for the chronicler to assert a supposed nobility and justify al-Mansūr's rule? Here too it is difficult to affirm with certainty that the author was aware of the meaning of the term. The author of the Silense version made more straightforward choices. Al-Mansūr's name is near-correctly given this time, as the *ḥādjīb/rex* who 'falsely adjudicated to himself the name of Almanzor'—a detail indicating that the chronicler may have been aware of the institutionally problematic nature of his power.⁶⁰ Besides, the author of this version intended to explain the source of al-Mansūr's extraordinary successes against the Christians:

He formed an alliance with the Saracens across the sea, and at the head of the whole people of the Ishmaelites he invaded the frontiers of the Christians and began to lay waste many of their kingdoms and to put [many] to the sword.⁶¹

⁵⁵ Accompanied by a lengthy study, the reference edition of both versions of the text is still that by Justo Pérez de Urbel, *Sampiro, su crónica y la monarquía leonesa en el siglo X* (Madrid: CSIC-Escuela de Estudios Medievales, 1952), pp. 275–346, henceforward *Samp.* On the authorship of the text, see Augusto Quintana Prieto, 'Sampiro, Alón y Arnaldo: tres obispos de Astorga, cronistas del reino de León', in *León medieval: doce estudios* (León: Colegio Universitario de León, 1978), pp. 59–68.

⁵⁶ Barkai, *Cristianos y musulmanes*, p. 47.

⁵⁷ Alejandro Peláez Martín, 'La imagen del poder público en al-Andalus a través de las crónicas cristianas de los siglos XI, XII y XIII', *Revista Historia Autónoma*, 11 (2017), 43–56 (p. 44).

⁵⁸ *Samp.*, pp. 343–44.

⁵⁹ *Samp.*, p. 343. See the remarks of Barkai, *Cristianos y musulmanes*, pp. 47–48, who however failed to observe the difference from the other version of the text.

⁶⁰ 'Rex eorum qui nomen falsum sibi inposuit Almanzor': *Samp.*, p. 344.

⁶¹ 'Consilio inito cum Sarracenis transmarinis et cum omni gente Ysmaelitarum intrauit fines christianorum, et cepit deuastare multa regnorum eorum, atque gladiis trucidare': *Samp.*, p. 344.

We find the expression *transmarini Sarraceni* in other Iberian texts contemporary with this version of the chronicle, referring to the Muslims residing on the other side of the Strait of Gibraltar.⁶² But in the *Chronicle of Sampiro* it is the only allusion to an Islamic world reaching beyond the Iberian Peninsula. In the *Historia Silense* however, the text where this detail originated, slightly more developed information about the Islamic world appears which, I argue, was once more intimately part of the chronicler's discursive strategy.

It is not easy to elaborate on the exact intentions of the author of the incorrectly named *Historia Silense*, given the state in which the text has survived.⁶³ Written during the second decade of the twelfth century by a Leonese cleric whose identity is still debated,⁶⁴ its stated purpose was to narrate the life of King Alfonso VI of Castile-León (r. 1065–1109). Never reaching that goal, the author produced instead a large text with a complicated narrative structure. Beginning with a series of good and bad examples of rulers—such as the Emperor Constantine who converted to Arianism, juxtaposed with King Reccared who led the Visigoths to

Here we retain the translation provided by Simon Barton and Richard Fletcher, *The World of El Cid: Chronicles of the Spanish Reconquest: Selected Sources Translated and Annotated* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 35.

⁶² This is the case in hagiographical texts, for example, such as the *Translatio sancti Isidori*, dated between 1064 and the second decade of the twelfth century. This text refers to the invasion of the Iberian Peninsula by 'transmarine Saracens' coming obviously from the Western Maghreb since it is specified that they crossed the sea which bathes Seville ('Transmarini namque Sarraceni mare illud, quod Yspalensi urbi alludit, transfretantes': José Carlos Martín, 'La *Translatio S. Isidori Legionem anno 1063* (BHL 4488): introducción, estudio y edición crítica', *Exemplaria Classica*, 15 (2011), 225–53 (p. 246)). On Muslims in the Iberian hagiographical productions, see Patrick Henriet, 'Remarques sur la présence des musulmans dans l'hagiographie hispano-latine des VIII^e–XIII^e siècles', in *Cristãos contra muçulmanes na Idade Média peninsular: bases ideológicas e doutrinárias de uma confrontação (séculos X–XIV) / Cristianos contra musulmanes en la Edad Media peninsular: bases ideológicas y doctrinales de una confrontación siglos X–XIV*, ed. by Carlos Ayala Martínez and Isabel Cristina N. Fernandes (Lisbon: Colibri/Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, 2015), pp. 141–59.

⁶³ Reference edition: *Historia Silense*, ed. by Justo Pérez de Urbel and Atilano González Ruiz-Zorrilla (Madrid: CSIC-Escuela de Estudios Medievales, 1959), henceforward *Sil*. Introduction and partial English translation of the text, which we use in this article, in Barton and Fletcher, *The World of El Cid*, pp. 9–64. Barton and Fletcher only translated the most original parts of the *Historia*, leaving aside notices borrowed from the *Chronicle of Alfonso III* and the *Chronicle of Sampiro*. Brief presentation and related bibliography by Patrick Henriet in *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History, Volume 3: 1050–1200*, ed. by David Thomas and Alex Mallett (Leiden: Brill, 2011), pp. 370–74.

⁶⁴ Georges Martin even recently proposed to rename the text *Historia legionensis*, owing to an author whom he identified as Ordoño Sisnández, canon of San Isidoro de León: Georges Martin, 'Ordoño Sisnández, autor de la *Historia legionensis* (llamada *silensis*). Notas histórico-filológicas sobre un *ego* fundador', *e-Spania. Revue Interdisciplinaire d'Études Hispaniques Médiévales et Modernes*, 14 (December 2012) <<https://doi.org/10.4000/e-spania.21711>>; Georges Martin, 'Ordoño Sisnández, autor de la *Historia legionensis* (versión revisada y aumentada)', *e-Spania. Revue Interdisciplinaire d'Études Hispaniques Médiévales et Modernes*, 30 (June 2018) <<https://doi.org/10.4000/e-spania.28195>>. Contra, see Patrick Henriet, 'L'*Historia Silensis*, chronique écrite par un moine de Sahagún. Nouveaux arguments', *e-Spania. Revue Interdisciplinaire d'Études Hispaniques Médiévales et Modernes*, 14 (December 2012) <<https://doi.org/10.4000/e-spania.21655>>.

Catholicism—, he then turned to the struggle that opposed Alfonso VI (then king of León) to his brother Sancho II of Castile (r. 1065–1072) during the first years of the former's rule, ending with Sancho's assassination. After another series of poor models including the Visigothic kings Wittiza and Roderic, the author proceeded to chronologically describe the reigns of the Asturian and Leonese kings from Pelagius to Alfonso V, incorporating in the meantime the *Chronicle of Sampiro*, which occasioned unfortunate repetitions. Having then set out to include an excursus dedicated to the Navarrese branch of Alfonso VI's ancestors, the author finally refocused his attention on the kings of León with Bermudo III (r. 1028–1037). The text ends with a large and laudatory narration of the reign of the first king of Castile-León, Fernando I (r. 1037–1065). Owing to the composition apparently unfinished aspect, much discussion has been devoted to its author's genuine enthusiasm to tell the life of Alfonso VI.⁶⁵ John Wreglesworth even boldly proposed to see in the *Historia Silense* a finished text that actually aimed at implicitly criticizing Alfonso VI.⁶⁶ In that respect, the few references to the Islamic world contained in the text might represent more evidence that the author indeed intended to write a biography of the king.

A quick read of the *Historia Silense* confirms a general lack of interest in Islam proper.⁶⁷ Brief references to the 'abominable name of Muḥammad' and the 'superstitious Mahometan sect' appear throughout the text,⁶⁸ testifying at least to a prejudicial familiarity from the author. But there is no attention drawn to the birth of Islam, or the secular development of the Islamic dominion. Muslims are in fact rather characterized by their barbarism, an antiquarian conceit that also shows in the geographical nomenclature employed in the text, where the names of the old Roman provinces are used to locate the territories occupied by the Muslims: *Baetica*, *Lusitania*, *Carthaginensis*. Notwithstanding that the *Chronicle of Alfonso III* was one of the sources of the text, we learn nothing of the provenance of those 'barbarians' in the first two passages that refer to the Arab invasion, rather unspecifically.⁶⁹ Nothing, either, of the evolution of Islam in Spain from province

⁶⁵ See ultimately the analysis of Alberto Montaner Frutos, 'Presencia y ausencia de Alfonso VI en la *Historia Legionensis (hactenus Silensis nuncupata)*', *e-Spania. Revue Interdisciplinaire d'Études Hispaniques Médiévales et Modernes*, 14 (December 2012) <<https://doi.org/10.4000/e-spania.21750>>. Montaner argues that the author genuinely intended to write the life of Alfonso VI.

⁶⁶ John Wreglesworth, 'Sallust, Solomon, and the *Historia Silense*', in *From Orosius to the Historia Silense: Four Essays on the Late Antique and Early Medieval Historiography of the Iberian Peninsula*, ed. by David Hook (Bristol: HiPLAM, 2005), pp. 97–129.

⁶⁷ Barkai, *Cristianos y musulmanes*, p. 135; Simon Barton, 'Islam and the West: A View from Twelfth-Century León', in *Cross, Crescent and Conversion: Studies on Medieval Spain and Christendom in Memory of Richard Fletcher*, ed. by Simon Barton and Peter Linehan, *The Medieval Mediterranean: Peoples, Economies and Cultures, 400–1500*, 73 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), pp. 153–74 (pp. 158–59).

⁶⁸ 'Nefanda Mahometis nomine': *Sil.*, cap. 26, p. 136; 'mahometica superstitiosa secta': *Sil.*, cap. 36, p. 146.

⁶⁹ The first chapter of the text laments that Spain, once culturally at its peak, died away 'overwhelmed by the strength of the barbarians' ('inundata barbarorum fortitudine': *Sil.*, cap.

to emirate and later caliphate, or the aggregate of *taifa* kingdoms over the course of the eleventh century. As a polity, al-Andalus remains a blurred entity, and its rulers, though often accurately named, are indistinctly titled *reges*.⁷⁰

And yet the *Historia Silense* offers some references to the larger Islamic world, and its connection with al-Andalus, in addition to the interpolation to the *Chronicle of Sampiro* already commented on above. The topic of the Arab invasion of Spain is thus raised a third time in the notices dedicated to King Roderic, accounted responsible for Spain's loss. In this regard, the *Historia Silense* was the first Latin text to transmit the story, of probable Mozarab origin, of a certain Visigothic count Julian who, in order to take revenge on Roderic who had raped his daughter, planned with the sons of former king Wittiza 'the introduction of the Moors [...] to cause the ruin of the whole kingdom of Spain'.⁷¹ Following this betrayal ultimately provoked by Roderic's reprehensible behaviour,

In the era 747 [i.e. 709 CE], Hulit the powerful king of the barbarians of all Africa, [...] dispatched to Spain Tariq Crossed-Eyes, one of the commanders of his army, with twenty five thousands foot soldiers so that [...] he would start the war against the Hispanic king [Roderic].⁷²

Behind 'Hulit' we recognize Caliph al-Walīd I, already named in the *Prophetic Chronicle*, whose title is here adapted as 'king of the barbarians' to correspond to the author's frame of mind. The Islamic domain is again assimilated to Africa, and the caliph is, a few lines further, mentioned a second time as *Africanus rex*.⁷³ The establishment of al-Andalus therefore is presented as linked to a larger 'African' Muslim empire. Another point of interest in this account of the invasion of Spain, to my view, is the importance given to the Maghreb specifically. Indeed, the place where the sons of Wittiza and count Julian decided the fate of Spain is situated: the

1, p. 113); in a later chapter dedicated to sinful king Wittiza, a providentialist description is provided: 'Then at length divine providence, decrying that Wittiza king of the Goths had for long been skulking among the Christians like a wolf among the sheep, [...] allowed barbarian peoples to take possession of Spain [...], few of the Christians being spared' ('Cum tandem diuina prouidentia Victicam, Gotorum regem, inter christicolos quasi lupum inter oues diu latere prospiciens [...] paucis christianorum reseruatis barbaras gentes Yspaniam ocupare permisit': *Sil.*, cap. 6, p. 118).

⁷⁰ Peláez Martín, *La imagen*, pp. 45–48.

⁷¹ 'Mauros introducendo, et sibi et totius Ispanie regno perditum iri disposuerunt': *Sil.*, cap. 15, p. 127. On the rape committed by Roderic as the cause of the Arab invasion, see Thomas Deswarte, 'Le Viol commis par Rodrigue et la perte de l'Espagne dans la tradition mozarabe', in *Mariage et sexualité au Moyen Âge: accord ou crise? Colloque International de Conques, 15–18 Octobre 1998*, ed. by Michel Rouche (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2000), pp. 69–79; Patricia E. Grieve, *The Eve of Spain: Myths of Origins in the History of Christian, Muslim, and Jewish Conflict* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009).

⁷² 'Igitur, era DCCXLVII, Hulit, fortissimus rex barbarorum totius Africe, [...] Tarich strabonem, vnum ex ducibus exercitus sui, cum XXV milibus pugnatorum peditum ad Ispanias premissit, vt [...] bellum cum Yspano rege inciperet': *Sil.*, cap. 16, pp. 127–28.

⁷³ *Sil.*, cap. 17, p. 128.

negotiations happened in the north-western African province of *Tingitana*.⁷⁴ North Africa would reappear again later in the notice dealing with the reign of Ordoño II (r. 914–924). Narrating the episode of the battle of San Esteban de Gormaz in 917, that opposed the Leonese king to emir ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III and resulted in a victory for the Christians, the author included a detail regarding the Muslim troops present on the occasion:

In order to thrust out such an enemy [i.e. the Christian army], the Moor [i.e. the emir] requested the assistance of those of *Tingitana*, and an immeasurable number of Moabites joined the expedition. Thus, with the addition of the utmost contingents of all of Mauritania, [...] an endless multitude of Ishmaelites set out to break through the frontier of the Christian territory.⁷⁵

In addition to the reference to the Islamic presence in *Tingitana* and Mauritania, we see appearing here a new way of designating Muslims, with the term ‘Moabites’ employed for the first time in an Iberian Latin historiographical text. Originally borrowed from the Bible, where the kingdom of Moab featured as one of the archetypal foes of Israel, the term Moabite entered the nomenclature used to generically name Muslims in Christian Iberian texts at the turn of the eleventh to twelfth century.⁷⁶ However at the same time, and probably due to a phonetic proximity between Latin and Arabic, it also started to be given another more restrictive meaning to refer to the Almoravids (*al-murābiṭūn*), the Berber dynasty that took power in the Western Maghreb in the second half of the eleventh century, and later ruled over al-Andalus from 1086.⁷⁷ For example, Bishop Pelagius of Oviedo (d. 1153) would make use of the term with this restricted meaning in his own *Chronicon regum Legionensium* when explaining the arrival of the Almoravids in Spain as a consequence of King Alfonso VI’s pride, following his many conquests at the expense of the Saracens of al-Andalus:

After this, he [Alfonso VI] reached such a pitch of elation because of such good fortune that at the instigation of king Abenabet [i.e. King Ibn

⁷⁴ ‘Ad Tingitanam prouintiam transfretantes, Iuliano comitti [...] adheserunt’: *Sil.*, cap. 15, p. 127.

⁷⁵ ‘Ad hoc pro expellendo tanto hoste, Tingintanorum presidia Maurus rogans, inmensum Moabitarum coadunauit numerum. Comparatis igitur ex tota Mauritania quam uallidissimis copiis, [...] ad expugnandos christianorum fines innumera ysmaelitarum multitudo dirigitur’: *Sil.*, cap. 46, p. 157.

⁷⁶ See Hélène Sirantoine, ‘What’s in a Word? Naming ‘Muslims’ in Medieval Christian Iberia’, in *Making the Medieval Relevant: How Medievalists Are Revolutionising the Present*, ed. by Chris Jones, Conor Kostick, and Klaus Oschema (Berlin: De Gruyter, forthcoming).

⁷⁷ Meritxell Bru, ‘Posar un nom: els Almoràvits com a Moabites a finals del segle XI’, *Faventia*, 31 (2009), 129–49. Bru also posits that the reason behind this restriction of meaning might have had to do with the Latin name given to the Almoravid golden coins, or *morabetinos*, then circulating in the Iberian Peninsula.

‘Abbād of the *taifa* of Seville] some foreigners called Almoravids were summoned from Africa to Spain.⁷⁸

In the *Historia Silense*, the meaning given to the term is not as straightforward. Barkai noted that it was a skilful way for the author to designate the Almoravids and convey the deprecatory character associated with the biblical image at the same time.⁷⁹ In 917, however, when a confrontation occurred between the armies of Ordoño II and those of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III, supplemented with the ‘Moabite’ contingents, there was no such thing as an Almoravid people. On the other hand, the correlation established between those *Moabitas* and the north African provinces of *Tingitana* and Mauritania makes it tempting to assert that the author aimed at distinguishing these Muslims territorially. Maybe ignorant of the peculiarities of Maghrebi history, from a term designating in his own time a people associated with a particular dynasty, this author developed more of an ethnic and geographical classification that remained valid for all historical periods. In any event, this interest in the north-western African part of the Islamic world would appear one more time in the *Historia Silense*, with the reference, as noted above interpolated in the *Chronicle of Sampiro*, to the *transmarini Sarraceni* with whom al-Mansūr attacked Christian Spain.⁸⁰ Following Julian’s call to the Moors of *Tingitana* in the early eighth century, and ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III’s summons of the Moabites in the tenth century, al-Mansūr’s appeal to the ‘transmarine Saracens’ at the turn of the millennium made the passing of Muslims from north Africa to Spain a recurring pattern of Iberian history. One that, had the author of the *Historia Silense* achieved his goal of writing about the life of Alfonso VI, would have without any doubt been repeated one more time, in a recounting of how the Almoravids came to progressively take possession of al-Andalus during the last two decades of Alfonso’s reign. Whether such a biography would have been laudatory or critical is impossible to say, but the punctilious dissemination of information regarding the Muslims from across the Strait of Gibraltar appears a skilful means to pave the way for informed narration. It constitutes one more piece of evidence to assert that the author indeed purported to complete a work that was, in the end, much more structured than its sketchy transmission at first suggests.

⁷⁸ ‘Post hec etiam tantis prosperitatibus ad tantam elationem peruenit, ut extraneas gentes que Almorabites uocantur ex Africa in Spania per regem Abenabet misit’: *Crónica del obispo don Pelayo*, ed. by Benito Sánchez Alonso (Madrid: Sucesores de Hernando, 1924), p. 82; English translation in Barton and Fletcher, *The World of El Cid*, p. 85. The *Chronicon regum Legionensium* is the original part of a larger historiographical compilation assembled by Bishop Pelayo of Oviedo c. 1120–50, known as *Corpus Pelagianum* or *Liber Cronicorum* (presentation in Barton and Fletcher, *The World of El Cid*, pp. 65–74.). The mentioned passage is the only one in the chronicle referring to Islamic territories other than al-Andalus.

⁷⁹ Barkai, *Cristianos y musulmanes*, pp. 135–36.

⁸⁰ *Sil.*, cap. 30, p. 172.

IV. The Emperor and His Muslims in the *Chronica Adefonsi Imperatoris*

The intermittent, though structural interest of the *Historia Silense* in north Africa would become, in the last chronicle examined in this paper, a fundamental aspect of the perception of Islam and Muslims. The *Chronica Adefonsi Imperatoris* was written between 1147 and 1149 to the glory of King of Castile-León Alfonso VII (r. 1126–1157), by a high-level cleric close to the royal family who might have witnessed part of the events he reported. The chronicle is dedicated to the life and deeds of the king from his accession to the throne in 1126 until the year 1147, and the beginnings of a military expedition that would end with the conquest of the Islamic port-city of Almería during the same year.⁸¹ To that purpose, the chronicler divided his work into two books: the first recounts the pacification of the kingdom of Castile-León following the tumultuous reign of Alfonso's mother, Queen Urraca I (r. 1109–1126); the second narrates the campaigns led by the king in al-Andalus and his conquests. Then, to describe the preparation for the campaign of Almería, the historian became poet and resorted to leonine hexameters to compose what is known as the *Poem of Almería*.⁸² Such a written work was innovative in the historiographical panorama of the time. In Spain it inaugurated the genre of the lengthy royal biography, breaking away from the traditional Isidorian model of a series of relatively short notices. It is also particularly original in its phrasing, with numerous biblical quotes informing the general tone, and quite lively too with many reported dialogues punctuating the text. Finally, in association to the crusading ethos present throughout, and towards a context of broader cultural and geographical perspective on Islam considerably enhanced since the early eleventh century,⁸³ the *Chronica* is also known to have marked a revival of interest in the Islamic world in Iberian historiography.⁸⁴

For that matter, the geographical horizons of the chronicler were very broad. If the narrative is local in its general purpose, Castile-León is conceived as part of a larger Christendom threatened by Muslims in what appears to be close to a

⁸¹ 'Chronica Adefonsi Imperatoris', ed. by Antonio Maya Sánchez, in *Chronica Hispana Saeculi XII: Pars 1*, Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis, 71 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1990), pp. 109–248, henceforward *CAI*.

⁸² 'Prefatio de Almaria', ed. by Juan Gil, in *Chronica Hispana Saeculi XII: Pars 1*, pp. 253–67. Detailed presentation of both the *CAI* and *Prefatio*, accompanied by an English translation from which we borrow the excerpts quoted in this paper, in Barton and Fletcher, *The World of El Cid*, pp. 148–263. See also the brief presentation and related bibliography by Simon Barton, in *Christian-Muslim Relations 3*, ed. by Thomas and Mallett, pp. 611–15.

⁸³ Richard Southern, in his *Western Views of Islam*, labelled the twelfth century as 'the century of reason and hope' to underline the end of 'the age of ignorance'. Although his view can be discussed, it is certain that the period was marked, in Christendom and in Northern Spain specifically, by substantially better informed engagement with the Islamic world. See Barton, 'Islam and the West'.

⁸⁴ See Daniel Baloup, 'Reconquête et croisade dans la "Chronica Adefonsi Imperatoris" (ca. 1150)', *Cahiers de Linguistique et de Civilisation Hispaniques Médiévales*, 25 (2002), 453–80.

global conception of the Mediterranean world.⁸⁵ The *Chronica*'s nobility goes on pilgrimage to Jerusalem to redeem their sins,⁸⁶ the presence of Christian captives in the Maghreb is the result of raids led by the Almoravid fleet whose route encompassed the entire Christian shores of the Mediterranean and beyond, with the English Channel mentioned as well,⁸⁷ while the collaboration of the Genoese and Spaniards to besiege Almería was justified as necessary to destroy a pirate base (*marinorum latronum sedes*) established in the port-city, because

The pirates, traversing many seas, would sometimes go ashore suddenly in the land of Bari, the land of Ascalon and the region of Constantinople, Sicily and Barcelona; at others, in the region of Genoa, or in Pisa, France, Portugal, Galicia or Asturias, and they would flee carrying Christian captives in their ships as booty.⁸⁸

A glimpse of the extension of the Islamic world can also be read in a brief mention relative to the death of one particular Muslim protagonist of the chronicle. Zafadola, the Latinized name for Sayf al-Dawla, plays an important role in the *Chronica*. Heir to the Huddid family that once ruled the *taifa* of Zaragoza, of which he was dispossessed by the Almoravids in 1110 before taking refuge in the fortress of Rueda de Jalón, 'King Zafadola' then became a close collaborator of Alfonso VII and the leader of the Muslim resistance against the Maghrebi Berbers.⁸⁹ He also died in unclear circumstances, betrayed by Christian counts who more or less revolted against Alfonso. A problem was that the king himself might have appeared the instigator of Zafadola's death, at a time when the Muslim leader had federated so many petty kings of al-Andalus that he could have represented in his turn a threat to the Christian king. To prevent any such consideration and preserve Alfonso's reputation, the chronicler made sure to mention a statement allegedly issued by the king, asserting that '[he was] guiltless from the blood of [his] friend Zafadola'.⁹⁰

⁸⁵ Carlos Manuel Reglero de la Fuente, 'Visión y construcción del espacio en la *Chronica Adefonsi Imperatoris*', *e-Spania. Revue Interdisciplinaire d'Études Hispaniques Médiévales et Modernes*, 15 (June 2013) <<https://doi.org/10.4000/e-spania.22367>>.

⁸⁶ *CAI*, I.48, p. 172, and II.30, p. 209.

⁸⁷ 'Alimenon [i.e. Muḥammad ibn Maymūn, commander of the Almoravid fleet; see Barton and Fletcher, *The World of El Cid*, p. 208 n. 21] ascendebat per mare Oceanum contra Galletiam et per mare Britanicum et per Mediterraneum mare contra partes Ascalonis et regiones Constantinopolitanorum et Sicilie et contra Barensem ciuitatem et alias maritimas et contra Barchinonensem regionem et omnia regna Francorum': *CAI*, II.9, pp. 199–200 ('Alimenon [...] crossed the Ocean Sea to attack Galicia, then sailed through the English Channel and across the Mediterranean to attack the area of Ascalon and the regions of Constantinople, Sicily, the town of Bari and other coastal towns, the region of Barcelona, and all the kingdoms of the Franks').

⁸⁸ 'Qui [i.e. the pirates] circuentes diuersa maria, nunc subito egressi terra Barensi et terra Ascalonis et regionis Constantinopolitanorum et Sicilie et Barchinonensis et nunc Genuae, nunc Pise et Francorum aut Portugalie et Gallecie uel Asturiarum, predas captiuos Christianos nauibus aduertentes fugiebant': *CAI*, II.107, p. 247.

⁸⁹ On Zafadola, see Francisco García Fitz, *Relaciones políticas y guerra: la experiencia castellano-leonesa frente al Islam: siglos XI–XIII* (Seville: Universidad de Sevilla, 2002), pp. 82–98.

⁹⁰ 'Mundus ego sum a sanguine Zafadole amici mei': *CAI*, II.98, p. 243.

Following this statement came the conclusion that ‘all the Christians and Saracens from Arabia, which is next to the River Jordan, as far as the Ocean Sea knew that the emperor was never party to the death of King Zafadola’.⁹¹ Thus resonating far beyond the frontier of al-Andalus in an Islamic world spanning from Spain to Arabia, this local event was gaining extraordinary Mediterranean echoes.

Additionally, the chronicler seems to have been especially committed to situate the history of al-Andalus within the contemporary dynamics of a Western Islamic world that he described with exceptional accuracy. Thus, he understood and transcribed quite well the geopolitical situation of al-Andalus in the first half of the twelfth century. At the beginning of Book II, aimed at narrating the king’s campaigns against Muslims, he explained that he had to digress back in time, to set the context of his account:

Departing from the natural order of things, let us come to deal with the wars which in times past were particularly hard-fought for the Christians. After the death of King Alfonso [VI, in 1109], [...] King ‘Alī, who was the most powerful among the Saracens, and who as king of Marrakesh ruled over the Moabites, and on this side of the sea over the Hagarenes far and wide, and over many islands and peoples of the sea, like a serpent thirsting in the summer heat, raised his head and, as if he would triumph everywhere after the death of such a great man, summoned all the princes, commanders and soldiers of the Moabites together with a great army of Arab mercenaries, and many thousands of horsemen, crossbowmen and great companies of foot-soldiers, as numerous as the sand which is upon the sea shore. Having received advice from his experts, he gathered an army and crossed the sea with his son Tāshufīn and went to Seville.⁹²

With these words, the chronicler was introducing the Almoravid emir ‘Alī ibn Yūsuf (r. 1106–1134), instigator and leader of several expeditions against the Christian frontier and Toledo, the detail of which is described in subsequent chapters, as well as the struggle of his successor Tāshufīn ibn ‘Alī (r. 1143–1145) with Alfonso VII, as reckoned later in the chronicle’s second book. What is particularly striking is the level of politico-ethnic detail included in this passage. King ‘Alī is ruling over the population of Marrakesh (*rex Marrocorum*), but above all he exerts his authority over two peoples: the Moabites, in which we must

⁹¹ ‘Et cognouerunt omnes Christiani et Sarraceni ab Arabia, que est iuxta flumen Jordanis, usque ad mare Oceanum quod imperator nunquam conscius extitit mortis regis Zafadole’: *CAI*, II.98, p. 243.

⁹² ‘Omisso naturali ordine ad ea, que olim Christianis asperima fuere bella, tractanda ueniamus. Post obitum regis domni Adefonsi [...] rex Ali maximus Sarracenorum, qui rex Marrocorum dominabatur Moabitis et ex ista parte maris Agarenis longe lateque aliisque multis et maris insulis et nationibus, sicut serpens estu sitiens extulit caput et quasi post mortem summi uiri ubique triumphatus conuocauit omnes principes et duces et milites Moabitarum et magnum exercitum conductitum Arabum et multa milia militum, balistorum et magnas multitudines peditum sicut arena que est in litore maris et, habito usuque industrium consilio, congregauit exercitum et transfretando uenit in Sibiliam et cum eo filius eius Texufinus’: *CAI*, II.1, p. 195.

recognize the Almoravids as is the case in the contemporaneous *Chronicle of Pelayo*, but also the Hagarenes. The term, traditionally used in Iberian texts as a mere synonym of ‘Saracens’ to generically refer to Muslims—and let us note that Saracen retains this generic meaning in the *Chronica*—, here acquires a more restricted meaning to refer to those specifically living ‘on this side of the sea’, that is, the Andalusis.⁹³ The author thus created a precise terminology destined to shed light on the politico-ethnic variety of the Muslims with whom Alfonso VII dealt during his reign. Later in the text another term would also be introduced to designate the Almohads, the Berber dynasty whose rise to power in the Maghreb between 1120 and 1147 was again well known by the author of the *Chronica*.⁹⁴ They first appear when the author mentions how King ‘Alī liked to enrol Christian captives in his army of mercenaries, particularly ‘to make war on the Muzmutos and the king of the Assyrians, called Abdelnomen, who attacked his territories without interruption’.⁹⁵ If the titling of the Almohad leader, later caliph, ‘Abd al-Mu’min (r. 1147–1163) as ‘king of the Assyrians’ adds to the Scriptural layer of the chronicle with a comparison to the biblical Nebuchadnezzar,⁹⁶ the term *Muzmuti*, a phonetic rendition of the ‘Mašmūda’ Berbers who first supported the Almohad movement,⁹⁷ provides another proof of the author’s attentiveness to contextualize his account as precisely as possible. Furthermore, he knew well enough the extension of what would become the Almohad dominion, described later in the text as spanning from the Maghreb to Ifrīqiya,⁹⁸ and he dedicated several paragraphs to narrate how the Almohads overthrew the Almoravids.⁹⁹

Eventually this knowledge of the Western Islamic world would be utilized in the chronicle to make sense of the, at first glance, astonishing friendship and collaboration that developed between Alfonso VII and Zafadola. Staging a secret embassy of the Hagarene princes sent to Zafadola in 1133, the chronicler resorted to the dramaturgic effect of reported dialogue to narrate what they supposedly asked him:

‘Speak to the king of the Christians and, with his aid, free us from the hands of the Moabites. We will give to the king of León royal tributes

⁹³ Barkai, *Cristianos y musulmanes*, pp. 140–41.

⁹⁴ Barton, ‘Islam and the West’, p. 165.

⁹⁵ ‘Ad facienda prelia contra Muzmutos et regem Asiriorum nomine Abdelnomen, qui expugnabat partes eius sine intermissione’: *CAI*, II.10, p. 200.

⁹⁶ Barton and Fletcher, *The World of El Cid*, pp. 208–09 n. 25.

⁹⁷ Barkai, *Cristianos y musulmanes*, p. 141.

⁹⁸ ‘Rex Asiriorum, cui nomen erat Abdelnomen, qui regnabat in Claris Montibus [i.e. the Atlas Mountains] et qui regnabat in monte Colobrar [location unknown] et in Bugia [Bejaia in Algeria] super gentes, quas uocant Muzmutos, et super alias multas nationes’: *CAI*, II.102, p. 244 (‘The king of the Assyrians, whose name was Abdelnomen, who ruled in the Claros Montes, in Mount Colobrar and in Bugia, over the peoples called the Muzmutos, and over many other nations’). Locations are identified in Barton and Fletcher, *The World of El Cid*, p. 246 nn. 203–05.

⁹⁹ *CAI*, II.102–04.

larger than those our forefathers gave to his, and with you we will serve him free from fear, and you and your sons will reign over us'.¹⁰⁰

To which Zafadola answered:

'Go, and tell my brothers the princes of the Hagarenes: "Take some strong castles and some strong towers within the cities, wage war in all parts, and the king of León and I will swiftly come to your aid"'.¹⁰¹

The break-up between Almoravids and Andalus is here evidenced, along with the negotiations initiated by the latter to rally Alfonso VII, and the role played by Zafadola to convince them to fight alongside with him against the Almoravids. Later on, a similar scene appears with the chronicler relating the premises of the Andalusis' general upheaval against the Almoravids in 1144:

Then, when the princes, commanders and all the Hagarene people saw that miseries were multiplied [...] they said: 'What can we do, since we shall not be able to withstand war with the emperor and his commanders?' Some of them replied saying: 'The Moabites eat the fat of the land, they take away our possessions and our gold and silver from us, and they oppress our wives and children. Let us fight against them [...] for we have no part in King Tāshufīn's palace neither have we inheritance in the sons of 'Alī and of his father Yūsuf [ibn Tāshufīn, the first Almoravid leader, d. 1106]'. Others said: 'First of all, let us make a peace agreement with the emperor of León and Toledo, and let us give him royal tribute, just as our fathers gave it to his fathers.' [...] Sending messengers, they called upon King Zafadola and all the lineage of the kings of the Hagarenes to come and make war on the Moabites.¹⁰²

In both passages, the Hagarenes are certainly portrayed as opportunists. However, by subtly underlining their lack of genetic and political connection with the Almoravids, the chronicler also represented them as committed allies of Alfonso VII in his dealings with Berbers depicted as invaders for all the inhabitants of the Iberian Peninsula. To reinforce this vision of the Almoravids as invaders common to Christians and Hagarenes, it should also be noted that, contrary to

¹⁰⁰ 'Loquere cum rege Christianorum et cum eo libera nos de manibus Moabitarum. Et dabimus regi Legionensi tributa regalia amplius quam patres nostri dederunt patribus suis et tecum securi seruiemus illi et tu regnabis super nos et filii tui': *CAI*, I.41, p. 169.

¹⁰¹ 'Ite, dicite fratribus meis principibus Agarenorum: capite uobis aliqua fortissima castella et aliquas firmissimas turres ciuitatum et mouete in omni loco bellum et ego et rex Legionensium succurremus uobis uelociter': *CAI*, I.41, p. 169.

¹⁰² 'Videntes ergo principes et duces et omnis populus Agarenorum multiplicata mala [...] dixerunt: "Quid faciemus, quia non poterimus substinere bellum imperatoris et ducum eius?" Responderunt nonnulli eorum dicentes: "Moabite medulas terre comedunt et possessiones nostras, aurum et argentum nobis tollunt, uxores nostras et filios nostros opprimunt. Pugnemus ergo contra eos et occidamus eiiciamusque dominium a nobis, quia non est nobis pars in domo regis Texufini neque hereditas in filiis Ali et patris eius Iuzeph". Alii autem dicebant: "Faciamus in primis pactum et pacem cum imperatore Legionis et Toleti et demus ei tributa regalia, sicut patres nostri dederunt patribus suis". [...] Et mittentes uocabant regem Zafadolam et omne semen regum Agarenorum, ut uenirent et bellarent contra Moabitas': *CAI*, II.93, pp. 239–40.

what Bishop Pelayo did in his own written work, the chronicler carefully omitted to mention the Andalusis' responsibility in calling the Almoravids for help in the first place.¹⁰³ In doing so, the author was conveying a sense of sympathy, if not toleration, for the Andalusis presence in the Iberian Peninsula, that contrasted with the fundamentally Islamophobic tonality of a text arisen in a context of crusade and 'infused [...] with a spirit of revenge'.¹⁰⁴ In that sense, 'the highly sectarian, yet simultaneously well-informed and, in one respect at least, thoroughly pragmatic vision of the Islamic world that was articulated by the *Chronica Adefonsi Imperatoris* serves as an important reminder of the highly complex and volatile nature of Christian-Muslim relations in the Iberian Peninsula'.¹⁰⁵

Furthermore, one additional level of meaning allows the argument that this ambivalence between crusading discourse and the occurrence of collaboration was far from being accidental. Picturing an Andalusis people threatened by the Almoravid foreigners, the author of the *Chronica Adefonsi Imperatoris* was perhaps exploiting a trend and genre that developed from the eleventh century in the Andalusis literature, one that cultivated a nostalgia of the long-gone Umayyad glory days, and made of al-Andalus an 'exception' within the Islamic world.¹⁰⁶ In such a perspective, some legitimacy was even recognized for al-Andalus. However, this legitimacy worked only as long as the Hagarenes were working together with, and ultimately subordinated to, Alfonso VII. Now, the excerpts commented above and the very title given to the chronicle must remind us that the reign of Alfonso VII is known to have been that of the 'Emperor of all Spain', as also evidenced by many other documents.¹⁰⁷ At the heart of the imperial ideology developed around the king/emperor, in particular in the *Chronica Adefonsi Imperatoris*, was the notion of suzerainty based on a bond of a feudal nature. Thus, the first book of the chronicle included the lengthy account of a general council gathered by Alfonso VII in León in May 1135, during the second day of which,

having taken divine counsel, the archbishops, bishops, abbots, all the nobles and commoners and all the people assembled again in the church of Saint Mary, together with King García [of Navarre] and the king's sister, to proclaim the king emperor because King García, King Zafadola of the Saracens, Count Ramón of Barcelona, Count Alfonso of Toulouse

¹⁰³ See above and note 78.

¹⁰⁴ As noted by Barton, 'Islam and the West', p. 169.

¹⁰⁵ Barton, 'Islam and the West', p. 173.

¹⁰⁶ Ross Ian Brann, 'Andalusis "Exceptionalism"', in *A Sea of Languages. Rethinking the Arabic Role in Medieval Literary History*, ed. by Suzanne Conkin Akbari and Karla Mallette (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), pp. 119–34 (pp. 123–24).

¹⁰⁷ On the imperial ideology of Alfonso VII, see Hélène Sirantoine, *Imperator Hispaniae. Les idéologies impériales dans le royaume de León* (Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 2012), in particular Chapter 8.

and many counts and magnates from Gascony and France obeyed him in all things.¹⁰⁸

As can be seen, Zafadola was one of the many persons attending the ceremony of imperial coronation, explained in the text as a matter of his obeisance to Alfonso. However, the chronicler also took care to demonstrate that obeisance and imperial domination were less suffered than sought after, and the first appearance of Zafadola in the text is accompanied by an explanation for his rallying to Alfonso VII:

At that time there was a Saracen king in Rueda called Zafadola. He was of the most illustrious lineage of the kings of the Hagarenes. All the deeds that had been performed by King Alfonso of León [...] resounded in his ears [...] and he said to [his people]: ‘Do ye know of all the deeds that have been performed by King Alfonso of León [...]?’ And they said: ‘We know.’ And he said to them: ‘What shall we do? For how long shall we be besieged here?’ For indeed they were confined by fear of the Moabites, because the Moabites had killed the descendants of the kings of the Hagarenes and had also taken their kingdom.¹⁰⁹

Following this painful observation, Zafadola then made the following proposition to his fellow Hagarenes:

‘Listen to my counsel: let us go to the king of León and let us make him king over us, our lord and friend, for I know that he will rule over the land of the Saracens, because God in heaven is his deliverer, and God on high is his help. I know that with his assistance my children and I will recover the other dominions that the Moabites plundered from me, from my parents and from my people’.¹¹⁰

The reason for Zafadola and the Hagarenes to enter into the obedience of Alfonso VII, and similarly the reason for the king to accept them into his empire, is made clear. Hagarenes are presented as the historical settlers of al-Andalus, deprived of their ‘dominions’ by the Almoravid invaders. Sharing a common

¹⁰⁸ ‘Archiepiscopi et episcopi et abbates et omnes nobiles et ignobiles et omnis plebs iuncti sunt iterum in ecclesia beate Marie et cum rege Garsia et cum sorore regis, diuino concilio accepto, ut uocarent regem imperatorem pro eo quod rex Garsias et rex Zafadola Sarracenorum et comes Raymundus Barchinonensium et comes Adefonsus Tolosanus et multi comites et duces Gasconie et Francie in omnibus essent obedientes ei’: *CAI*, I.70, p. 182.

¹⁰⁹ ‘Temporibus illis erat quidam rex Sarracenus in Rota nomine Zafadola et erat rex ex maximo semine regum Agarenorum. Et personuerunt in auribus eius omnia gesta, que facta sunt ab Adefonso rege Legionis [...] dixitque [...]: ‘Nostis omnia que gesta sunt ab Adefonso rege Legionis [...]?’ Qui dixerunt: ‘Nouimus’. Dixitque ad eos: ‘Quid faciemus? Vsquequo hic clause erimus?’ Ipsi enim errant clausi propter metum Moabitarum, quia ipsi Moabites occiderant omne semen regum Agarenorum et inde abstulerant regnum eorum’: *CAI*, I.27, pp. 162–63.

¹¹⁰ ‘Audite consilium meum: et eamus ad regem Legionis et faciamus eum regem super nos et dominum et amicum nostrum, quia, sicut ego noui, ipse dominabitur terre Sarracenorum, quia Deus celi liberator eius est et Deus excelsus adiutor eius est. Et scio quia per ipsum recuperabo ego et filii mei alios honores, quos abstulerunt Moabites mihi et patribus et gentibus meis’: *CAI*, I.27, p. 163.

sense of Hispanic identity with the Iberian Christians, and a common hatred for these foreigners, the Andalusis had therefore a rightful role to play in Alfonso's 'Hispanic empire'.¹¹¹ Ultimately, the interest demonstrated by the author of the *Chronica Adefonsi Imperatoris* for the history of the Western Islamic world was an integral part of the broader narrative of the empire he designed.

V. Conclusion

A general approach to the medieval Iberian historiographical writings transmitted to us shows that while early medieval Christian texts depicted the political aspects of the rise of the Islamic world, later this characterization tended to disappear. In the account of their rulers' struggle against the Islamic 'unmentionable law', later Christian historiographers did not pay much attention to the whole history of Islam's socially and politically contingent complexities. This transition certainly appears distinctly if we compare texts such as the eighth-century *Chronica byzantia-arabica* and *Chronicle of 754*, where Iberian history takes place in a Mediterranean background that included the early Islamic empire, and later local histories where the Saracens were mostly Andalusis evolving in a blurred Islamic environment seen through the prism of its interactions with the Christian northern kingdoms. However, as has been demonstrated throughout this article, the local focus of historians did not preclude the strategic appearance or absence of the Islamic world in their vision of historical facts. Sometimes, even in the most chronologically or geographically national texts, glimpses of this Islamic world appear that testify to an awareness these Christian historiographers possessed of some aspects of Islamic history.

Moreover, if obscuring the Islamic world could be part of a strategic cultivation of alleged ignorance by the chroniclers,¹¹² the texts analysed all show that the opposite of silence was at least as strategic. The variable modalities of translation and insertion observed here reveal various discursive strategies in which the information included was not an accident of textual transmission, but rather part of a plan designed by the chroniclers to interpret their past, and their present. Depicting the birth of Islam and its territorial expansion up to the Iberian Peninsula was useful to the author of the *Prophetic Chronicle* to predict the end of the Andalusi presence in Spain, where a cycle of the history of empires would be closed. For the author of the *Chronicle of Alfonso III*, evidencing the historical and institutional connection between al-Andalus, the Islamic Empire, and his 'Babylonian king' was rather a way to enhance the virtue of the Visigothic/Asturian people, in opposition to such a mighty enemy. More stereotypical even in its representation of the Muslims as 'barbarians', the *Historia Silense* nevertheless made the crossing of Moabites from *Mauretania* to *Hispania* a recurring event of Iberian history. It would have eventually been repeated one more time in the unfinished biography of King Alfonso VI, had the author had the opportunity of

¹¹¹ Sirantoine, *Imperator Hispaniae*, pp. 353–56.

¹¹² See above, note 13.

describing how the king faced the irruption in Spain of the Berber Almoravids. The ethno-geographical situation of the Western Islamic world was, finally, extraordinarily portrayed in all its complexity by the author of the *Chronica Adefonsi Imperatoris*, for the purpose of unfolding the imperial strategy of Alfonso VII and the role he gave to the Andalusis in his 'Hispanic empire'.

Appropriating the history of the Islamic world, these historians presented alternative solutions to medieval Christian intellectualizations of Islam, and translated its historical and geopolitical configuration in terms that would serve their own view of the past and contemporary political positionings.

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